



Rhode Island Department of Health  
Office of Food Protection

[www.health.ri.gov](http://www.health.ri.gov)

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# Food Safety During a Power Outage

**The following guidelines provide information on steps to follow during a power outage:**

- Have coolers on hand to keep refrigerator food cold if the power will be out for more than 4 hours. Purchase ice cubes and store in the freezer for use in the refrigerator or in a cooler.
- The refrigerator will keep food safely cold for about 4 hours if it is unopened. A full freezer will hold the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full and the door remains closed).
- Food may be safely refrozen if it still contains ice crystals or is at 41 °F or below.
- Obtain block ice or dry ice to keep your refrigerator and freezer as cold as possible if the power is going to be out for a prolonged period of time. Fifty pounds of dry ice should hold an 18-cubic-foot full freezer for 2 days.
- If the power has been out for several days, then check the temperature of the freezer with an appliance thermometer or food thermometer. If the food still contains ice crystals or is at 41 °F or below, the food is safe.
- If a thermometer has not been kept in the freezer, then check each package of food to determine its safety. If the food still contains ice crystals, the food is safe.
- Discard refrigerated perishable food such as meat, poultry, fish, soft cheeses, milk, eggs, leftovers, and deli items after 4 hours without power.
- Never taste a food to determine its safety!

**When in Doubt, Throw it Out!**

Adapted for the RI Department of Health from the United States Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Service's "Food Safety During an Emergency."